

Ex-Envoy Says He Protested Atom Bombs Off Japan: Barge Disclosed by Ellsberg 'Still There in 1967'

By RICHARD HALLORAN Special to The New York Times
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WASHINGTON, May 22 — Edwin O. Reischauer, former United States Ambassador to Japan, said today that after he discovered 20 years ago the United States Navy had a barge bearing nuclear arms in Japanese waters, "I blew my top" and the Navy told him they would withdraw it.

Mr. Reischauer, reached by telephone in Boston, said the ship was anchored off a Marine air base at Iwakuni, in central Japan, and appeared to violate American understandings with Japan on nuclear weapons.

Mr. Reischauer said, "I immediately

protested to Washington." He said officials there asserted that they would take care of it and he presumed they did. Mr. Reischauer is now a professor at Harvard.

In Washington, the official who received Mr. Reischauer's protest, U. Alexis Johnson, confirmed Mr. Reischauer's account and said he passed the message to a senior official in the Pentagon, Paul H. Nitze, who had the ship moved. "That's all there was to it," Mr. Johnson said.

Barge Disclosed by Ellsberg

Mr. Johnson, who was Deputy Under Secretary of State at the time, said he thought the incident occurred in the

spring of 1961 while Mr. Reischauer thought it was later that year. But both said they were not be sure.

The presence of the nuclear weapons on the barge was disclosed by Daniel J. Ellsberg, the antiwar activist who made available the history of the Vietnam War that came to be known as the Pentagon Papers a decade ago.

Mr. Reischauer disclosed this week that an unwritten agreement between the United States and Japan permitted American warships carrying nuclear weapons to make routine port calls and transits of Japanese waters. That disclosure has caused a political stir in Japan, where sensitivities over the atomic

bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 remain high.

Mr. Ellsberg said at a news conference this morning that his account of the 1961 incident was recorded in a memorandum he dictated 10 years later. The memorandum, which he made available to reporters and which came to light yesterday, covered a period when, as a Government official, he inquired into the deployment of nuclear weapons and their command and control systems.

He said in the memorandum that, in 1958 and 1959, "Japan had as the central provision of its security arrangements with the United States the explicit agreement in writing that no nuclear weapons would ever be stationed in Japan."

Under questioning, however, Mr. Ellsberg acknowledged that his statement "is misleading and ambiguous." Under the security treaty in effect at that time, there was no prohibition against United States nuclear weapons in Japan.

When a new treaty was negotiated in 1960, the United States agreed not to station or store nuclear weapons in Japan without Japanese consent, but the confidential, unwritten transit agreement allowed temporary passage of weapons through Japan on ships and aircraft.

'Still There in 1967'

Mr. Ellsberg said today that the ship bearing the nuclear arms "was still there in 1967" and asserted that it might still be there. Both Mr. Reischauer and Mr. Johnson said, however, that they were sure the ship had been withdrawn in 1961.

Mr. Ellsberg said the ship was an LST, or landing ship, tank, that carried nuclear bombs for Marine planes based ashore. The ship's home port, he said, was on Okinawa, which was then under American control, but that it anchored for long periods off Iwakuni in the guise of an electronics repair ship.

A spokesman for the Navy would not comment. A spokesman for the Marine Corps, while neither confirming nor denying the report about the nuclear weapons, said that Marine Air Wing 12 was stationed at Iwakuni at the time and was equipped with A-4 attack planes that could carry tactical nuclear bombs.